

A SERMON ON A GRAND OLD TEXT

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A SERMON
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*“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance,
that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”
1 Timothy 1:15*

[Other sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text are as follows, #184, The Glorious Gospel, #1345, For Whom is The Gospel Meant? #1416, The Faithful Saying, #1837, A Great Gospel for Great Sinners, and #2300, The Whole Gospel in a Single Verse.]

YOU will observe that Paul wrote this verse immediately after he had given a little outline of his own personal history. He had, he said, been “a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious,” and then he added this priceless Gospel verse, as if he inferred it from God’s grace to him, as well as received it by inspiration, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”

It was an experiential text then, one which the apostle fetched out of the deeps of his own soul, as divers bring pearls from the ocean bed. He dipped his pen into his own heart when he wrote these words. No preaching or teaching can equal that which is experiential. If we would impress the Gospel upon others, we must have first received it ourselves. Vainly do you attempt to guide a child in the pathway which you have never trodden, or to speak to adults of benefits of grace which you have never enjoyed. Happy is that preacher who can truly say he speaks what he does know, and testifies what he has seen.

The testimony of Paul is peculiarly forcible because he was a very straightforward man. Before his conversion, he was second to none in opposing the Gospel. He was a downright man who never did anything by halves. As the old Saxon proverb puts it, “It was neck or nothing with him.” He threw his whole nature into anything which he espoused, and it must have been indeed a mighty inward force which led him to speed forward so eagerly in the directly opposite way to that which he had pursued with enthusiasm throughout the early part of his life.

He was an honest man, a man to whom it was impossible either to lie or to be neutral. He was truthful, sincere, outspoken, wearing his heart upon his sleeve, and carrying his soul in his open hand. When we hear him say, as the outcome of his own personal experience, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, we may be sure that he believed it with his whole being, and we may receive his testimony as one which he lived to prove, and died to seal with his blood.

Never had a fact a better witness, he lost all for its sake, and counted that loss his greatest gain. Hear you his words, for he speaks to you from the ground which received his blood, his blood speaketh better things than that of Abel, and it cries with a voice no less loud and clear.

The text, as we find it, is like a picture surrounded with a goodly border. We sometimes see paintings of the old masters in which the bordering is as full of art as the picture itself, we might safely say as much of our text. We will look at *its framework* first, here it is, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance.” When we have carefully considered that, we will study *the great masterpiece itself*, meditating upon the matchless saying, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.” When we have noticed the preface and the saying, you will then allow me to preach *a short sermon upon it*.

I. First, then, THE FRAMEWORK. Paul says, “*it is a saying.*”

When we declare a sentence to be a saying, we mean that it is commonly spoken, and usually said, so that everybody knows it, it is town talk, “familiar in our mouths as household words.” Those who like harder words explain that this is an axiom, a Christian axiom—a self-evident truth, a thing which nobody doubts who is a Christian at all, but I will keep to our own version, and add that I greatly wish that our text were more truly a saying among all Christian people at this day.

That Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners is a truth which we all believe, but do we all talk about it so frequently as to make it in very deed a saying? Do you think that our servants, who have lived for months in our houses, would in their gossips say, “It was one of my master’s sayings, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners”?

I will even ask—Do you think that, if a person attended our places of worship for years, he would be able conscientiously to say, “Why, it was our minister’s ordinary saying, it was quite a proverb with him, he was always repeating that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners”? Yet a sentence cannot be called “a saying” until it is often said. It does not get into the category of sayings, and is not called by that name unless it is a matter of ordinary common talk.

I gather, then, from this, that Christian people ought to talk more about the Gospel than they do, and a great deal more about that primary and elementary truth of the Gospel, the coming of Jesus Christ into the world to save the guilty. Believers ought so often to speak of it that it should be currently reported, amongst even ungodly people, as one of our common phrases and stock speeches.

I should like them to be able to taunt us with it as a main part of our conversation. It would even be a good sign if they complained that we wearied them with it. Let them say, Why, they are always harping on that string, even their children lisp it, their young men boast of it, and their matrons and their sires affirm it, and add their solemn seal thereunto, as if it were the sheet-anchor of their lives.”

O you who know the wondrous story, talk you of the Gospel by the way, talk of it when you sit in your houses, speak of it at your work, tell it to those who pass you in the street or in the fields! Make the world hear it, make society ring with it. If there is a new saying, though it be but a jest, men report it, and every newspaper finds a corner for it, are we to be silent about this oldest and yet newest saying?

Men rejoice in *bon mots*, and yet this is the best of words. We have the really good news, let us publish it, let us popularize the Gospel, and compel men to know what it is. If before some men we are less communicative upon the more mysterious truths because we fear to cast pearls before swine, yet let this simple truth, since Scripture calls it “a saying,” be spoken again and again and again till it shall be confessed to be a common word among us.

Now Paul did not merely write “it is a saying,” but “*it is a faithful saying,*” a saying worthy of faith, a saying full of truth, a saying about which no doubts may be entertained, a sure and certain saying, “that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Many sayings in the world had been much better left unsaid. There are proverbs which pass current amongst us as gold which are spurious metal, and no man can tell the mischief which an untruthful proverb may work, but this is a saying fraught with unmingled benefit, it is pure truth, a leaf of the tree of life sent for the healing of the nations.

Some matters which were important years ago are now worn out. Times have changed and circumstances have altered, and things are not now what they were to our forefathers, but this is a faithful saying because it is as practically true today as when, eighteen hundred years ago, the apostle wrote it to the beloved Timothy. This is still a saying full of blessing to the nations, “that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

Like the sun, it shines with the same golden light as in the ages past, and blessed be God, it will still shine when you and I have gone to our rest, and if this crazy world holds out another thousand years, or even fifty thousand, the light of the Gospel will not have grown dim. This coin of heaven will not have lost its image or its superscription when time shall be no more, it is of God’s minting, and will outlast the world, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

Ah, you heard it when you were a boy, and you did not think much of it. Your years are now many, and your life has almost run its course, and you are still unsaved, but thank God that now, in your old

age, we have the same truth to tell to you, though you rejected it in your boyhood, and it is quite as certain now as then that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” To the eleventh hour this precious sentence abides sure. May none of you despise it or doubt it, but each one of you prove it to be God’s own word of salvation!

Our apostle, however, adds yet another word, this saying “*is worthy of all acceptation.*” I think he meant two things. It is worthy of all the acceptation anyone can give it, and it is worthy of the acceptation of all men. Some sayings are not worth accepting, the sooner you have done with them, and forgotten them, the better for you, but this saying you may receive as truth, and having received it as truth to other men, it will be a happy circumstance if you receive it as truth to yourself, for it will be a blessed day to you when you appropriate it as your own. “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

If I, feeling myself a sinner, infer that Jesus came to save me, I may without any fear rest assured that I am accepting a truth, for, believing in Jesus, I may safely rejoice that He came to save me. You may receive this truth not only into your ear—it is worthy of that acceptation, or into the memory—it is worthy of that acceptation, but you may receive it into your inmost heart—it is worthiest of all of that acceptation, and receiving it, you may lay upon it all the stress of your soul’s interests for the past, the present, and the future, for time and for eternity, you may accept it as being the mainstay, the prop and pillar of your confidence, for it is worthy of all the acceptation that you or any other man can possibly give to it.

It is worthy, we have said, of the acceptation of all mankind. The richest, the greatest, the most learned, the most innocent, the most pure—speaking after the manner of men—these may accept it, it is worthy of their acceptation. In the sight of God they are still guilty, and need that Christ should save them. And on the other hand, the lowest, the most ignorant, the most groveling, depraved, debauched, abandoned, helpless, hopeless, lost, castaways may receive it, for it is true to them, emphatically to them, for Jesus Christ came into the world to save just such offenders as they are.

If I stood in Cheapside tomorrow, and any man out of the crowd should come to me and say, “Is that sentence, ‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,’ worth my believing and accepting?” I would not hesitate, but without knowing who spoke to me, I would reply, “Yes.” If he stopped his carriage, and came to me, or if he took his hand off the costermonger’s barrow, or left his shoe-blackening box, or came with his rags about him, or if he had escaped from the prison omnibus, it would not matter who he was, I might safely assure him that this saying is worthy of his acceptation. It is not a stoop for a king or a saint to receive it, and yet it meets the level of the poorest and the worst of characters. It is worthy of everybody’s acceptance.

Beloved friends, no one can ever rightly accuse us of making too much of the Gospel. However earnest we may be, we can never be too earnest, and however diligent to spread it, we can never be too diligent, for it is a Gospel worthy of every man’s acceptance, and therefore, worthy of every Christian’s publication. Spread it, let the winds bear it, let every wave proclaim it, write it everywhere, that every eye may see it, sound it in all places, that every ear may hear it.

Simple are the words, and to some men their meaning is despised as almost childish, but it is the great power of God. “A mere platitude,” they say, yet it is a platitude which has made heaven ring with sacred mirth, a platitude which will make earth’s deserts blossom like a rose, a platitude which has turned many a man’s hell into heaven and his densest darkness into the brightness of glory.

Ring out that note again, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” it is worthy of angelic trumpets, it is worthy of the orator’s loftiest speech, and of the philosopher’s most profound thought. It is worthy of every Christian’s publication, as surely as it is of the acceptance of every human being. God help us never to undervalue it, but to prize it beyond all price! There is the frame of the picture, the basket of silver which holds the apples of gold.

II. Our meditation now turns to THE SAYING ITSELF, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Very briefly and simply I will open up this passage as if none of us had hitherto understood it. May the Holy Ghost instruct us!

Here is, first, *a Person coming*—a divine Person—Christ Jesus the anointed Savior. The Son of God, the second person of the ever-blessed Trinity, became the Savior of sinners. “Very God of very God” was He. He created the earth, and upon His shoulders the pillars thereof still lean. Yes, He who was personally offended by human sin, He, Himself, deigned to become the Savior of men. Weigh this, and marvel and adore!

Next, you have *the deed He did*, He “came into the world.” He was born a babe in Bethlehem, it was thus He came into the world. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” Thirty years and more He lived in the world, sharing to the full its poverty and toil. He was a working man, He wore the common garb of labor, He wrought, He hungered, He thirsted, He was sick, He was weary, He, in all these senses, came into the world, and became man among men, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh.

As it was a sinful world, He was vexed with the transgressions of those about Him, as it was a suffering world, He bore our sickness, as it was a dying world, He died, and as it was a guilty world, He died the death of the guilty, suffering in their stead the wrath of God.

Mark well *the objective for which He came*, He came “to save.” He came into this world because men were lost, that He might find them and save them. They were guilty, and He saved them by putting Himself into their place, and bearing the consequences of their guilt. They were foul, and He saved them by coming into the world, and giving His Holy Spirit, through whose agency they might be made new creatures, and so might have pure and holy desires, and escape the corruption which is in the world through lust. He came to sinners to take them just where they are at hell’s dark door, to cleanse them in His precious blood, and fit them to dwell with Himself in eternal glory, as saved souls forever.

This is all wonderful. Angels marvel at it, so may we, but the most wonderful fact of all is that He came into the world to save *sinners*, not the righteous, but the ungodly. Remember His own words, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” The physician comes to heal the sick, the Savior comes to save the lost. To attempt to save those who are not lost, would be a ridiculous superfluity, to die to pardon those who are not guilty, would be a gross absurdity. It is a work of supererogation to set free those who are not in bonds.

Christ came not to perform an unnecessary deed. If you are not guilty, the Savior will not save you. If you are not a sinner, you have no part in Christ. If you can say, “I have kept the law from my youth up, and am not a transgressor,” then we have no Gospel blessings to set before you. If you were blind, the Lord Jesus would open your eyes, but as you say, “We see,” your sin remains. If you are guilty, the text is full of comfort for you, it drops with honey like a honeycomb, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*.”

Lest there should be any mistake, Paul added these words, “of whom I am chief,” or “of whom I am first,” and Calvin warns us against supposing that the apostle labored under a mistake or uttered an exaggeration. Paul was an inspired man writing inspired Scripture, and he spoke the truth. He was, in some respects, the chief of sinners. He went very, very far into sin. It is true that he did it ignorantly in unbelief, but then, unbelief is, in itself, the greatest of all sins.

It is an atrocious thing for a man to be an unbeliever, it is a damning sin, what if I say *the* damning sin? We have heard of a man who had committed a violent assault, who, before the magistrate, pleaded that he was drunk. Now, it is sometimes the case that magistrates admit this as an extenuating circumstance, but the magistrate on that occasion was a sensible man, and therefore he said, “Very well, then, I give you a month for the assault, and I fine you forty shillings for being drunk, that is another offense, and it cannot diminish your guilt.”

So is it with unbelief. Though, from one point of view, it might be looked upon as a mitigating circumstance, yet, from another, it is really an increase of sin, and Paul regarded it as such, and

therefore, he believed himself to be the chief of sinners. Yet he declares that Christ Jesus came to save him.

Now, if a great creature can pass through a certain door, a smaller creature can, if a bridge is strong enough to bear an elephant, it will certainly bear a mouse, if the greatest sinner who ever lived has entered into heaven by the bridge of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, no man who has ever lived may say, "My sin is beyond forgiveness." Today no mortal has a just pretence to perish in despair. Some of you continue to despair, but you have no ground for such a feeling, for this is the good news which is preached to you, that Jesus Christ has come to call the guilty, the lost, and the ruined to Himself, and to save the vilest of them with a great salvation.

III. Thus we have looked at the setting of the text, and at the text itself. Now for A BRIEF SERMON upon it.

Our short homily shall begin with *the doctrine of the text*, and we will handle it negatively. Notice that our text does not say that Jesus Christ has come to compliment, to encourage, and to foster the independent spirit of righteous men. It is not written that He has come to tell us that human nature is not so bad as some think it to be, or that He has come to commend those who are self-reliant, and intend to fight their own way to heaven. There is not a word of the kind, and what is more, there is not a word like it in the entire Book of God. There is no encouragement in Holy Scripture to the man who depends upon himself for salvation, or who imagines or conceives that eternal life can spring out of his own loins, or can be wrought out by anything that he can do, and yet our human nature loves to do something to save itself.

I do not know that I ever felt my blood boil so with indignation, nor my heart melt so much with pity, as when I went to see the Santa Scala, at Rome, the holy staircase up which our Lord is said to have been brought by Pilate. On those very stairs, Martin Luther was crawling on his knees, trying to find pardon for his sins, when the text came to him, "The just shall live by faith."

I stood at the foot of those marble stairs. They are very high, and they are covered with wood, lest the knees of the faithful should wear them out, and this wood has been worn away three different times by the kneelers. I saw men, and women, and children—little children too, and aged women, going up from step to step upon their knees to find their way to heaven. On the first step there is a little hole in the wood so that the worshippers may kiss the marble, and they all kissed it, and touched it with their foreheads, the middle and top step are favored in the same manner.

It was an awful reflection to me to think that those poor creatures really believed that every step their knees knelt on there were so many days less of purgatory for them, that every time they went up the stairs there were so many hundreds of days of deliverance from the punishment of their sins. Oh, if they could but have understood this text, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"—that men are not saved by crawling on their hands and knees, or by penances and self-inflicted misery, what a blessing it would have been to them, and how they would have turned with scorn from these infamous impostures with which priests seek to mislead and destroy the souls of men! No, the Scripture does not say that Jesus came to encourage the righteous, and to help those who are their own saviors.

Note, again, that it does not say in the text that Jesus Christ came to help sinners to save themselves. There is a Gospel preached which is very much like that, but it is not the Gospel of Christ. The poor man who was wounded on the road to Jericho was found by the Samaritan half-dead. Now the Samaritan did not say to him, "I want you to come part of the way to me in this business." But he came where he was lying wounded and half-dead, and poured the oil and wine into his wounds, bound up the gashes, took him and set him on his own beast, carried him to the inn, and did not even ask him to pay the reckoning, but said to the host, "If there be anything more, I will pay you."

If there were anything more to be done for sinners, Jesus would do it, for He would never let them have a share of the work of salvation. The sinner's business is to take the finished work of Christ, to give

up all his own doings, and let Him, who came from heaven to save, do the saving which He came to do. It is not ours to interfere, but to let Jesus do His own work.

Another thought demands expression. The text does not say that Christ came to half-save sinners, intending, when He had completed half the work, to leave them to themselves. There is a notion abroad that men may be saved, and yet may fall from grace, that they may have eternal life, but it is eternal life of an odd kind, for it may die out, they may be pardoned, and yet punished, they may be children of God, and yet become children of the devil, members of Christ's body, and yet be cut off, and joined to Satan.

Blessed be God, it is not so written in this precious Book! Jesus does not begin the saving work and leave it unfinished. When He once puts His hand to it, He will go through with it, His wonderful salvation shall be completed, none shall say that He began, but was not able to finish. Glory be to His name, Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners from top to bottom, He will be the Alpha and the Omega, He will be the beginning and the end to all who trust Him.

One other reflection here. Christ, the real Savior, came into the world to save real sinners. When Luther was under a bitter sense of sin, he said, "Oh, but my guilt is so great I cannot believe that Christ can save me!" But one who was helping him much said to him, "If you were only the semblance of a sinner, then Christ would only be the semblance of a Savior, but if you are a real sinner, then you should rejoice that a real Savior has come to save you."

If we meet with a man who says, "Yes, I am a sinner, I know I am a sinner, but I do not know that I ever did much amiss, I have always been honest and correct," such a person has a name to be a sinner and no more. He is a sham sinner, and a sham savior would suit him well. But for another who confesses that he has been a grievous transgressor, there is a real Savior.

Rejoice, O you guilty ones, that the Christ of God, Himself, really came, with real blood and presented a real atonement to take away real sins, such as theft, drunkenness, swearing, uncleanness, Sabbath-breaking, lying, murder, and things I need not mention, lest the cheek of modesty should blush, even these can be blotted out by the real Savior who has come to save the chief of sinners from suffering what is due to their sins. Oh, that we could ring this great Gospel bell till the hills and valleys were filled with its music! May the Lord open men's ears and hearts that those who hear the glad tidings may accept the Savior who has come to save them!

My little sermon has dealt with the doctrine of the text, now it must treat of *the differences from the text*, which are these.

First, it is a great and a difficult thing to save a sinner, for the Son of God must needs come into the world to do it. It could not have been accomplished by any other except Jesus Christ, and He Himself must leave the throne of heaven for the manger of earth, and lay aside His glories to suffer, and bleed, and die. If soul-saving be so great and difficult a work, let the Lord Jesus have all the glory of it now that it is accomplished, let us never put the crown on the wrong head, or neglect to honor the Lord who bought us so dearly. Unto the Lamb of God be honor and glory, forever and ever! Amen.

And next, it must be a good thing to save a sinner, since Jesus would not have come from heaven to earth on an ill errand. It must be a great blessing to a sinner to be saved. Dear brethren, this ought to lead all of us to consecrate ourselves to be willing instruments in the hand of Christ in endeavoring to rescue the fallen. That work which filled the Savior's heart and hands is noble work for us. It were worth living for and worth dying for to be the instruments in the Spirit's hands of bringing souls into a state of grace.

Think much of the blessed service which Jesus allots you, though it is but to teach an infant class in the Sunday school, or a few poor men and women whom you visit from house to house, or a group of sorry idlers at a local lodging house, mind not the degradation of the people, for to save them from sin is a work which God Himself did not disdain to undertake.

Another inference I draw is that if Jesus came from heaven to earth to save sinners, depend upon it, He can do it. If He has come into the world, and bled and died to be a Savior, He can do it. The price He paid is enough to redeem us, the blood He shed suffices to cleanse us. If there be any man here who

feels himself very foul and filthy, let him look up to Christ at the right hand of the Father, and dare to say in his soul, "He can save even me, He is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins, and He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. He must be able to save me." O soul, if you can say that, and venture your soul on it, there is no risk in it, your faith shall save you, and you may go in peace, for he who can rely upon Christ shall not find the Savior fail the faith which He Himself has wrought in the soul.

These are the inferences, then, which I gather from the text. And I shall close by *an inquiry*, which my text very naturally raises in my mind, and suggests to you. If Jesus came to save sinners, has He saved *me*? Has He saved *you*?

Has He saved *me*? I dare not speak with any hesitation here, I *know* He has. Many years ago, I understood by faith the plan of salvation. Hearing it simply preached, I looked to Jesus, and lived, and I am looking to Him now. I *know* His Word is true, and I *am* saved. My evidence that I am saved does not lie in the fact that I preach, or that I do this or that. All my hope lies in this, that Jesus Christ came to save sinners. I am a sinner, I trust Him, He came to save me, I am saved, I live habitually in the enjoyment of this blessed fact, and it is long since I have doubted the truth of it, for I have His own Word to sustain my faith.

Now, beloved, can *you* say, if not positively, yet with some measure of confidence, "Yes,"—

*"All my trust on Him is stayed,
All my help from Him I bring"?*

Ah, then, you are favored, you are very favored. Be happy, for God has highly blessed you. You ought to be as merry as the days are long in June. A man who can say, "Christ has saved me," has bells enough inside his heart to ring marriage peals forever. Oh, be glad, be very glad, for you have the best inheritance in the world, and if temporal matters are not quite as you would wish them to be, do not become discontented, but solace yourself with the fact that the Lord has saved you with a great salvation!

But are you compelled to answer, "No, I do not think that Christ has saved me"? Then I will ask you another question—May it not be, ere this day is finished, that you shall be able to say, "He has saved me"? Look at the matter. It is written that He came to save *sinners*. Is that your name or not? Spell it over. Are you a sinner? I have distinguished between a sham sinner and a real sinner. Do you confess that you are guilty? Then Jesus came to save such as you are.

There is a passage of Scripture which says, "He that believeth on him is not condemned." You know what to believe is, it is to trust, to rely upon. Now soul, if you rely upon Christ Jesus, sinner as you are, you are a saved sinner. If you do lean on Him, you are this moment saved, at this instant forgiven!

"Oh, but I, I __," ah! you want to crawl up that Roman staircase, do you? That is what you want, you are anxious to go up and down those steps. "No," you say, "I am not quite as foolish as that." But indeed, if you are trying to be saved by your own works, you are quite as foolish. You make a Pilate's staircase for yourself, and toil up and down its steps. "Oh but sir," you say, "I must *be* something, I must *feel* something." Yes, yes, it is that staircase again, always that staircase.

Now the Gospel is not that staircase, nor yet your feelings, nor yet your works, its voice is, "He that believeth on him is not condemned." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." You smile at the folly of Romanists, and yet Popery, in some form or other, is the natural religion of every unconverted man. We all want to do the crawling and penancing in some shape or another. We are so proud that we will not accept heaven for nothing. We want to pay, or do something or other, forgetting that, "if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned." The one only plan of salvation is "Believe and live," trust, rest, depend upon, rely upon Jesus.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

2 CHRONICLES 33:1-19

Verses 1-2. *Manasseh* [Manasseh is the subject of the following sermons by Mr. Spurgeon, #105, Manasseh, #2378, Pardon for the Greatest Guilt, and #2385, Another Lesson from Manasseh's Life] *was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem: but did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD,—*

Yet who could have had a better father than Manasseh had? He was given to Hezekiah during those fifteen years which God graciously added to that good king's life. Manasseh was, therefore, doubtless carefully trained, and looked upon as being one who would maintain God's worship, and the honor of his father's name. But grace does not run in the blood, and the best of parents may have the worst of children. Thus Manasseh, though he was the son of Hezekiah, "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord,"—

2. *Like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.*

It often happens that when the sons of good men become bad, they are among the worst of men. They who pervert a good example generally run headlong to destruction.

3. *For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the hosts of heaven, and served them.*

One form of idolatry was not enough for him, he must have all forms of it, even rearing altars to Baal, and making the stars also to be his gods.

4. *Also he built altars in the house of the LORD, whereof the LORD had said, In Jerusalem shall my name be for ever.*

Manasseh was worse than an ordinary idolater, for he polluted the very place which was dedicated to the service of the only living and true God.

5-6. *And he built altars for all the hosts of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom:*

Perhaps he gave some of them actually to be burned in honor of his false gods, or if not, some of his children were made to pass through the fire and were thus dedicated to the idol deities.

6. *Also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.*

You cannot imagine, I think, a worse character than this Manasseh was. He seems to have raked the foulest kennels of superstition to find all manner of abominations. Like false-hearted Saul, he had dealings with a familiar spirit, he had entered into a covenant with Satan himself, and made a league with hell, and yet, marvel of grace! this very Manasseh was saved, and is now singing the new song before the throne of God in glory.

7-9. *And he set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon, his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen before all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever: neither will I any more remove the foot of Israel from out of the land which I have appointed for your fathers; so that they will take heed to do all that I have commanded them, according to the whole law and the statutes and the ordinances by the hand of Moses. So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel.*

You see, dear friends, that he was not only a monster in iniquity himself, but he led a whole nation astray. Some people who, under the gracious rule of his father, Hezekiah, had kept the passover in so joyous a manner, now, under this false son of so good a father, turned aside.

10. *And the LORD spoke to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken.*

This was all that was necessary to fill up the measure of his guilt. He and his people were warned of God, but they would not hearken.

11. Wherefore—

Since words were not sufficient, and God intended to save him, he came to blows, “Wherefore”—

11. *The LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.*

They very likely chastened him with thorns, for the kings of Babylon were very cruel, and it may be that when his back was lacerated by thorny scourges, he was put in prison with heavy fetters upon him.

12-13. *And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him: and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he was God.*

There surely can be no person in this assembly who can say that he has sinned worse than Manasseh did. He seems to have gone as far as any human being could go, and yet, you see, when he humbled himself before the Lord, and lifted up his heart in supplication, God forgave his sin, and restored him to his former position in Jerusalem.

14. *Now after this he built a wall without the city of David, on the west side of Gihon in the valley, even to the entering in at the fish gate, and compassed about Ophel, and raised it up a very great height, and put captains of war in all the fenced cities of Judah.*

This is not of very much importance, but what else did he do?

15. *And he took away the strange gods,—*

When grace comes into any man’s heart, there is sure to be a change in his action. Manasseh “took away the strange gods,”—

15. *And the idol out of the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the LORD, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city.*

Sins which were before so pleasing to him are now abominations in his sight, and he flings them over the city wall like unclean things. In the very valley of the son of Hinnom where he had dedicated his sons to idols, he now consumes his idol gods as foul and offensive things, to be cast away with all the refuse of the city.

16. *And he repaired the altar of the LORD, and sacrificed thereon peace offerings and thank offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel.*

It was not possible for him to undo all the evil which he had wrought, as he soon found out.

17. *Nevertheless the people did sacrifice still in the high places, yet unto the LORD their God only.*

The work of reformation is slow, you can lead men to sin as rapidly as you like, that is downhill work, but to get them to toil with you uphill toward the right is not so easy.

18-19. *Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer unto his God, and the words of the seers that spake to him in the name of the LORD God of Israel, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel. His prayer also, and how God was entreated of him, and all his sin, and his trespass, and the places wherein he built high places, and set up groves and engraved images, before he was humbled: behold, they are written among the sayings of the seers.*

So we must remember that all the deeds that we have done, both good and evil, are written in God’s Book of Remembrance.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.